

Safe Kids Kansas Leads Local Activities on International Walk to School Day Oct. 5

Kansas children had an opportunity to participate in a very special walk to school when over 35 schools and community groups across the state celebrated International Walk to School Day on Oct. 5. Safe Kids Kansas sponsors Kansas Walk to School Day each year to teach children about safe pedestrian behavior and to encourage schools and communities to improve the walking environment. More than 7,000 children participated in the events statewide.



Based on new research released by Safe Kids Worldwide with funding from FedEx Express, Kansas communities have many of the characteristics of a dangerous community for child pedestrians.



Federal Express partnered with Safe Kids Worldwide to determine characteristics of safe communities for child pedestrians.

The Kansas City Metro Area was ranked the 20th most dangerous U.S. metro area for child pedestrians among 47 major metropolitan areas studied. Memphis, Tenn., was ranked as the most dangerous U.S. metro area and Austin, Texas, was the safest of the areas evaluated in *Child Metropolitan Areas*.

“We learned from this study that it is not just one thing that determines the relative safety of cities,” says Jan Stegelman, Safe Kids Kansas coordinator. “Many factors contribute to the safety of our children as

pedestrians, including how involved the community is as a whole. It is everyone’s responsibility to protect the children in our state from pedestrian accidents.”

Factors common to the safer areas include:

- **Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.** Cities designed to be pedestrian-friendly were found to be safer than those designed to cater only to drivers. Areas with more interconnected streets that are accessible and encouraging to pedestrians were found to be safer than those with wide, diffuse street networks.
- **Civic involvement in pedestrian safety issues.** There was a higher rate of collaboration in the safer areas among multiple community organizations than was reported in the more dangerous areas. Safe Kids Kansas will continue to encourage partnerships among local organizations dedicated to improving their community.
- **Support from government agencies.** Child pedestrians were found to be safer in areas where the local government and the state are involved in pedestrian safety.
- **More frequent exposure to walking.** It was also found that in the safer areas children tend to walk more frequently than children in the more dangerous areas. Children who walk less frequently may be less aware of safe pedestrian behaviors. Safe Kids Kansas encourages parents to walk often with their children and teach them safe behaviors.

Nationwide, pedestrian injuries are the number two cause of accidental death among children ages 5 to 14. Each year in the United States, approximately 650 children are killed and 43,000 treated in emergency rooms as a result of pedestrian injuries. In Kansas, 43 percent of the children hospitalized for pedestrian injury were age 5-9.



More than 7,000 Kansas school kids participated in the Oct. 5 Walk to School Day event sponsored by Safe Kids Kansas, with funding support from Federal Express.

As part of Kansas Walk to School Day, children and parents received tips on how to choose a safe walking route, pedestrian safety tips, and a Walkability Survey which helps

parents to determine how safe their child's route to school is. All participating children received a reflective zipper pull for their backpack. If you would like more information about safe walking tips and how to improve child pedestrian safety in your community, or for a copy of *Child Pedestrians at Risk*, visit www.usa.safekids.org.